

forward to joining my colleagues in finally passing this bill later today.

JANUARY 6

Now, Mr. President, on January 6, this morning, the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, in partnership with the Rules Committee, released a joint report related to the aspects of the tragedy of January 6.

I particularly salute Chairs PETERS and KLOBUCHAR for the good work they have done with their ranking members.

The report drew a few notable conclusions, especially with respect to the failures in intelligence gathering and communication that took place on and before January 6, but just as glaring as what the report didn't consider is, indeed, what it was not allowed to consider. The report did not investigate, report on, or hardly make any reference to the actual cause, the actual impetus, for the attack on January 6.

With the exception of a brief reference to former President Trump's remarks at the Ellipse, Senate Republicans insisted that the report exclude anything having to do with the cause of the insurrection.

If anything, the joint report by the Homeland Security and Rules Committees has strengthened the argument for an independent commission on January 6.

We had a perfect opportunity to establish such a Commission at the end of last session before Republicans mounted a partisan filibuster against it, despite the fact that the Democrats worked with Republicans for weeks in the House and Senate to construct a Commission that was bipartisan, focused, straight down the middle; despite the fact that Speaker PELOSI acceded to every major request made by House Republicans about the structure of the commission; and despite the fact that, here in the Senate, I supported the changes proposed by my colleague Senator COLLINS.

As the Big Lie continues to spread, as faith in our elections continues to decline, it is crucial—crucial—we establish a trusted, independent record of what transpired on January 6 and what caused it.

So I reserve the right to bring legislation for an independent, bipartisan Commission to the Senate floor for another vote.

PAYCHECK FAIRNESS

Mr. President, now, on paycheck fairness, finally, this week the Senate will vote on whether to take up legislation that would provide equal pay for women in America.

We have been talking about the wage gap for years now, with no action taken by the Senate.

Women with the same jobs, the same degrees, sometimes even better degrees than their male colleagues, are making less money. For women of color, the gap between them and their male counterparts is even wider.

This is a fundamental issue of fairness, and we have a very simple, com-

monsense legislative proposal to address the issue. But yesterday, the Republican leader said Democrats' attempts to bring this issue up for a debate was "transparently designed to fail." He went on to say that issues like gun safety and pay equity were merely "demands of [our] radical base."

Look, the only way that a bill to provide equal pay for women is designed to fail is if Senate Republicans block it. And if the Republican leader wants to talk about "radical" positions, I would say that opposing legislation to provide equal pay for women, supported by a solid majority of voters, is a radical position. Does he believe that?

You know what is radical? Opposing legislation to expand background checks to prevent felons and the mentally ill from getting a gun. More than 90 percent—90 percent—of Americans support that policy. But Republicans have, in the past, opposed it. That is truly a radical position.

You know what else is radical? Opposing a bipartisan, independent Commission to report on a violent mob that attacked this Capitol. Spreading doubt about the veracity of our elections. That is radical and, in my opinion, despicable. It gnaws at the very roots of this grand democracy. And we hear either encouragement or acquiescence from the other side when President Trump and his minions do this.

You know what else is radical? Passing laws that specifically make it harder for younger, poorer, and non-White Americans to vote. That is truly radical and dangerous. It is against the whole grain of progress we have made in America. Remembering that when the Constitution was passed, the vast majority of us in this Chamber, not the vast majority but probably the majority—I haven't counted—would have to be White, male, Protestant property owners to vote, we have made progress. They want to take a giant step back for pure electoral gain. Radical. That is radical.

So we are going to have a vote on paycheck fairness this week. The first vote is not even a vote on the bill; it is just a vote on whether to take it up for debate. We will see if our Republican colleagues take the radical step of blocking the Senate from even debating equal pay for women.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will wrap up consideration of a broad bipartisan effort to update our approach to competition with China. This bill has accelerated an important conversation on a topic we all know deserves our full attention. From critical supply chains to intellectual property, to counter-espionage, it touches on key issues that will help determine our strategic footing for decades.

That is why an overwhelming majority of us, myself included, voted to proceed to the measure here on the floor, not because the bill was already perfect. In fact, as the ranking member of the Commerce Committee noted when it was reported out, the legislation was "not ready for prime time."

Rather, we took it up precisely because it deserved robust debate and amendment. So I was glad that several of our colleagues were allowed to offer substantial revisions here on the floor. In particular, I am glad the Democratic leader thought better of blocking Chairman WYDEN and Ranking Member CRAPO from including their bipartisan provision on combating illicit trade practices.

But I was disappointed that he proceeded with an effort to end this important debate without allowing the Senate to consider a number of other outstanding Republican amendments.

There is no practical reason our consideration of this important issue should have to compete for sufficient space on the Democrats' dance card.

We are talking about making America more competitive with its biggest and fastest growing rival. If any issue demands thorough, exhaustive debate, it is this one.

Unfortunately, the final bill we will be voting on today will remain incomplete. It includes several smart, targeted measures but leaves many more on the table. And so it will advance as an imperfect approach to an extremely consequential challenge.

One thing this legislation did demonstrate extremely well, however, was that the rules of the Senate don't stand in the way of bipartisan legislating.

Needless to say, final passage of this legislation cannot be the Senate's final word—final word on our competition with China. It certainly won't be mine. As I have warned repeatedly, soft power is only as strong as the hard power underpinning it.

The Chinese Communist Party doesn't hesitate in investing the proceeds of its predatory trade practices and influence campaigns directly into modernizing its hard power arsenal.

Over the past two decades, defense spending in Beijing has increased astronomically. Meanwhile, the Biden administration's proposal for defense spending puts forward such a meager—meager—year-on-year increase, it fails to keep pace with inflation, let alone with our rivals.

The White House request would degrade our ability to project power

quickly out in the Western Pacific. It would cannibalize Pacific Deterrence Initiative funds intended to build infrastructure and enhance interoperability with our partners in the region just to cover shortfalls elsewhere in the budget. And it would cut procurement of critical munitions that are already in short supply.

The administration is playing a dangerous shell game, and the political consequences aren't lost on either side of the Pacific.

The perception that the United States might be any less than fully committed to prevailing in great power competition has left China emboldened and our friends in the region quite worried.

Here at home, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs sounded the alarm, warning that great power peace was "fraying at the edge."

Preserving that peace will require more than the action we will take today. It will require this administration to get serious about funding our national defense. It will require major investment in the sorts of cutting-edge capabilities that deter those who intend harm on America and our allies.

So in the coming weeks, we will see whether Democrats' talk about rebuilding alliances has any substance to it. In the annual Defense authorization and the appropriations process, the Senate will embrace this essential debate about restoring America's hard power head-on. This is a pivotal moment, not a time for half measures on America's national security.

JANUARY 6

Mr. President, now on another matter, today, the Homeland Security and Rules Committees released the conclusions of their monthslong investigation into the circumstances of the unprecedented breach of security here at the Capitol on January 6.

I am grateful to our colleagues on both committees whose hard work made this invaluable report possible.

My assessment of the terrible events of the 6th has been consistent from the beginning. I have condemned the perpetrators, as well as those who enabled and encouraged them, and I have given full-throated support to our colleagues' bipartisan inquiry, along with the work of Federal investigators and prosecutors, to ensure that every criminal participant faces justice.

The Rules and Homeland Security report identifies a number of serious shortcomings in Capitol security that were exposed and exploited on the 6th. It directs our attention to the most glaring gaps that could leave the complex vulnerable to future incidents.

Through the efforts of the Capitol Police, the Senate Sergeant At Arms, and other institutional partners, the Senate's work to close these gaps is already well underway. The committee's inquiry into January 6 is ongoing, and the nationwide search for a new Chief of the Capitol Police is making progress. Our colleagues' latest find-

ings should guide the entire institution's ongoing security reviews.

Today's report is one of the many reasons I am confident in the ability of existing investigations to uncover all actionable facts about the events of January 6. I will continue to support these efforts over any that seek to politicize the process, and I would urge my colleagues to do the same.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT *pro tempore*. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT *pro tempore*. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority whip is recognized.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, one of the major responsibilities of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, is the selection of judges to serve our Nation. It is important not only because it is a question of measuring their standards of integrity, honesty, and judgment but also because these are lifetime appointments. Literally, the women and men who are chosen for these slots will have an impact on the future of America in their courts which could last for many years and decades. That is why we are careful with the Biden administration to not only bring good nominees before the Committee but to make certain they bring the necessary qualities.

This week, the Senate will consider several of President Biden's judicial nominees. I believe they understand the role of a judge in our system. They will bring much needed experiential and demographic diversity to our Nation's courts.

I have tried throughout my career, and many others like me have tried, to choose men and women for the bench who will reflect the diversity of America. The face of justice is often as important as the fact of justice, and if people appearing before our courts feel that there is at least a chance for success based on the background and experience of a judge, I think it is a positive thing.

Given the background of these judges in trying cases, arguing appeals, and issuing rulings from the bench, I believe, and the committee agreed, that these judicial nominees are ready for service.

Today, I would like to speak in support of two of them: Julien Neals, nominated to the District Court of New Jersey, and Regina Rodriguez, nominated to the District Court of Colorado.

New Jersey is really in desperate need of Federal judges. They are facing a judicial emergency. In each of the States' six judicial vacancies, they have been designated as a judicial emergency status by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

Today, we can begin to address this judicial emergency by finally confirming Julien Neals to the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey. He is an extraordinary public servant. He has served the people of the State of New Jersey for decades. As an expert in municipal law, he handled several legal disputes that were tried to verdict, judgment, or final decision, including multiple—multiple—jury trials. He was the chief judge of the Newark Municipal Court. He presided over 6,000 cases in that capacity.

He received a unanimous rating of "well qualified" from the American Bar Association. He has the strong support of his home State Senators, Senators CORY BOOKER and BOB MENENDEZ. He has received broad bipartisan support in the Judiciary Committee, with five Republicans joining all the Democrats in supporting his nomination.

I urge my colleagues to support him.

This week, the Senate will also consider the nomination of Regina Rodriguez to be a judge in the District Court of Colorado. What a life story she brings. Ms. Rodriguez is the daughter of a Japanese-American mother, whose family was interned during World War II, and a Mexican-American father who was one of the first Hispanic coaches in the National Football League. Her father's job as a coach took the family across the country.

Although Ms. Rodriguez was born in Colorado, she spent several of her formative years in my home State of Illinois. When she was 17 years old, Ms. Rodriguez thought she might want to be a lawyer, so she put on her best suit, as she says, and knocked on doors in Macomb, IL, until she found a lawyer who said: "Come on in. I'll show you the ropes."

Lucky for us, Ms. Rodriguez held on to that passion that first developed when she was a teenager. Over the past 30 years, she has served as a talented litigator who has tried 35 cases to verdict.

She has a range of experience in government and the private sector. In the public sector, she served as an assistant U.S. attorney and rose to become the first Latina Chief of the Civil Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado. In private practice, she represented a broad array of clients, from individuals to Fortune 500 firms. During her tenure as a litigator, Ms. Rodriguez has demonstrated that she understands the importance of applying the law to the facts in a fair manner. She has represented plaintiffs, defendants, government, and those who have sued the government. As a woman of color, she has risen as a partner in several leading law firms—no mean feat.

Ms. Rodriguez has taken out time from her demanding schedule to mentor young attorneys, just as that lawyer in Macomb, IL, did for her.

She has received a unanimous "well qualified" rating from the American Bar Association, as well as positive